DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 230 967 CS 207 678

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TITLE Dorothy Day's Vision of Journalism.
PUB DATE Aug 83
NOTE 35p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (66th, Corvallis, OR, August 6-9, 1983). Part of a chapter in "Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker," N. L. Roberts (State Univ. of New York Press, 1983).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Advocacy; Catholics; *Change Agents; Content Analysis; Journalism; Media Research; *Newspapers; *News Writing; *Social Action; Social Change; United States History
IDENTIFIERS *Catholic Worker (The); *Day (Dorothy), Journalism History

ABSTRACT

An examination of Dorothy Day's role as chief journalist, editor, and publisher of "The Catholic Worker," the ideological monthly she cofounded in 1933, reveals that she was the final authority within the organization of the newspaper. Deeply committed to proselytizing for her cause, the Catholic Worker Movement, Day still simultaneously identified with the goals of the professional journalist. This meant that she, like other alternative journalists, was a participant journalist who emphasized "advocacy over neutrality" and "interpretation over speed of transmission." Unlike the others, however, she did not emphasize "substance over technique," and, most importantly, her ideological commitments did not overshadow her identity as a professional journalist. Instead, they existed in tense but effective tandem. One result of this was an outstanding written and edited product, with a carefully crafted dual appeal to workers and scholars. The paper was instrumental in winning the Worker Movement wide support, eventually even that of the Catholic Church, which had initially disapproved of its unprecendented union of secular radicalism with Catholic traditionalism. Dorothy Day's combination of advocacy and professionalism has not often appeared among alternative journalists. (Author/FL)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

DOROTHY DAY'S VISION OF JOURNALISM

by

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Minneapolis

This paper is part of a chapter in Dorothy Day and The Catholic Worker, to be published by the State University of New York Press.
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Presented to the History Division at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Annual Convention in Corvallis, Oregon, August 1983.

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ABSTRACT History Division

DOROTHY DAY'S VISION OF JOURNALISM

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Dorothy Day's role as chief journalist (and editor and publisher) of The Catholic Worker, the ideological monthly she co-founded in New York in 1933 as the organ of the Catholic Worker Movement. Until her death in 1980, the social activist Day was the final authority within the organization of the paper, guiding its content and tone. Her determined leadership gave it an editorial consistency and continuity through even those periods in history most hostile to its message of social justice and pacifism (World War II, the Korean War, and the early years of Vietnam).

This study addresses Day's perceptions of her journalistic role; her goals; and, in part, her working relationships with staff, sources, and the public (including the Catholic Church). Deeply committed to proselytizing for her cause, Day still simultaneously identified with the goals of the professional journalist. This meant that she, like the alternative journalists surveyed in The News People (Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman, 1976) was a participant journalist who emphasized "advocacy over neutrality" and "interpretation over speed of transmission." But unlike them, she did not emphasize "substance over technique" and most importantly, her ideological commitments did not overshadow her identity as a professional journalist. Instead, they existed in tense but effective tandem. One result was an outstandingly written and edited product, The Catholic Worker, with a carefully crafted dual appeal to workers and scholars. The paper was instrumental in winning the Movement wide support, eventually even that of the Catholic Church, which had initially disapproved of its unprecedented union of secular radicalism with Catholic traditionalism. Dorothy Day's combination of advocacy and professionalism has not often appeared among alternative journalists.

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DOROTHY DAY'S VISION OF JOURNALISM

I. Introduction

As a journalist for The Masses, The Socialist Call, and The Liberator during the jazz age, Dorothy Day belonged to the New York literary and social avant-garde. Eugene O'Neill recited "The Hound of Heaven" to her in a Greenwich Village speakeasy, and her other friends included Malcolm and Peggy Baird Cowley, Caroline Gordon, Hart Crane, Allen Tate, and John Dos Passos.

But Day, who died in November 1980 at the age of 83, is most known for the radical Catholic Worker Movement and the quality monthly paper by the same name that she started with Peter Maurin in 1933, after her conversion to Catholicism. In 1983, with a circulation of about 100,000, the publication continues to act as a leaven upon American consciences, publicizing the fourfold aims of the Catholic Worker Movement: communitarian Christianity; an emphasis on "personalism" or personal activism to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, and perform other physical and spiritual works of mercy; voluntary poverty; and nonviolent social justice and absolute pacifism.

To the end of her life, Day functioned as the final authority within the organization of the paper (and the Movement, for that matter), guiding its content and tone. Her determined leadership as chief writer, editor, and publisher gave the paper its consistency and continuity through even those periods in American history most hostile to its message. From the start of The Catholic Worker during the Great Depression, when circulation peaked at 190,000; through World War II when subscriptions plummeted to 50,500 and Catholic Workers selling the pacifist-oriented paper were even beaten in the streets; and then during the McCarthy era,

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the Korean War, and Vietnam, Dorothy Day maintained The Catholic Worker's commitment to peace and social justice activism.

Although a secular radical, Day was a fervent Catholic traditionalist who never criticized the Church's teachings, only its failure to live up to them. Her absolute obedience to Catholic Church authority won her the eventual support of the hierarchy, allowing her to continue publication without interruption. And the wheel has turned. Today more than half the bishops in the United States have publicly endorsed a bilateral United States - Soviet Union freeze on nuclear weapons; their recent pastoral letter is a striking departure from the American Catholic tradition of support for the military. Repeatedly, bishops and clergy have acknowledged the peace movement's debt to Day and The Catholic Worker.[1]

While The Catholic Worker never spoke for a mass movement, nor enjoyed a circulation larger than that of a metropolitan daily newspaper, its message has reached influential channels. Nearly everyone in today's Catholic Left has been associated with it in some fashion. Outstanding among a long list of "graduates" who have transmitted some of the Catholic Worker Movement ideals they absorbed firsthand, are: Trappist monk and author Thomas Merton; writers Arthur Sheehan and J.F. Powers; James O'Gara, Edward Skillin, and John Cogley of Commonweal (Cogley later became New York Times religion editor); peace activists and authors Daniel and Philip Berrigan, Gordon Zahn, Thomas Cornell of the Catholic Peace Fellowship, and James Forest of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation; Eugene and Abigail McCarthy; trade union activist John Cort; and Michael Harrington, who based his book The Other America (1962) on his experiences as a Catholic Worker editor. One of the first examinations of poverty in seemingly affluent America, it commanded the attention of

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President John Kennedy and inspired his anti-poverty programs.

The Catholic Worker can be compared to other small, liberal, ideological publications run by faith, hope, and charity, such as Appeal to Reason, The Nation, The Masses, and I.F. Stone's Weekly. But for several reasons The Catholic Worker occupies a unique place in American journalism history. Its impact on American consciences has been comparatively much greater. Its editorial viewpoint represents the first viable union of Catholic traditionalism with secular radicalism in a periodical. It surpasses all publications in its singular consistency, over half a century, to one price (a penny a copy) and to one editorial line.[2] And that consistency has been maintained by the long editorship of Dorothy Day.

II. Justification for Study

Remarkably, journalism historians have almost completely overlooked Day's work as founder, chief writer, editor, and publisher of the longest-running, editorially consistent, influential "ideological" publication in American history. Although the body of Catholic Worker Movement literature is burgeoning, there is still no published detailed appraisal of The Catholic Worker as effective advocacy journalism. William D. Miller is well known for his two books on the Movement: A Harsh and Dreadful Love (Liveright, 1973) and Dorothy Day: A Biography (Harper and Row, 1982). While well researched and presented, these books include no footnotes or other scholarly apparatus and do not address in any detail the evolution of the paper under the guidance of Dorothy Day. Furthermore, while scholars applaud Miller's initiative in providing the first serious, full-length studies of the Catholic Worker Movement,

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his work is limited by his almost uniformly admiring viewpoint which provides little critical analysis.

Mel Piehl's Breaking Bread: The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America (Temple, December 1982) is an excellent, needed scholarly study of the Catholic Worker Movement in the context of American intellectual history. However, it hardly addresses The Catholic Worker from the perspective of journalism history.

Many questions, then, remain to be answered about The Catholic Worker. Some of the most compelling deal with Dorothy Day's role as chief journalist for that publication -- for example, her perceptions of that role; her goals; her relationships with her sources, fellow journalists, and the public, including the Catholic Church. This paper will primarily examine Dorothy Day's perceptions of her role as a journalist; it will also address in part her role as editor and publisher of The Catholic Worker, for hers was the unusual position of combining these three positions.

III. Discussion

Dorothy Day as Journalist

"Ideology is the cornerstone of alternative journalism," concluded Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman in their recent pathbreaking sociological portrait of journalists, The News People.[3] This is borne out in Day's case by her candid avowal, early in her Catholic Worker career, that the publication's purpose was "to influence the thought of its readers." She added, "We are quite frankly propagandists for Catholic Action."[4]

"None of the Catholic Workers has any news sense," she observed approvingly in 1942 in The Catholic Worker. "They are not journalists, thank God -- they are revolutionists. They don't see a feature story in

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the fact that someone in Boston contributed a tree to the House of Hospitality there." [5]

"The great work which is to be done," she explained on another occasion, "is to change public opinion, to indoctrinate, to set small groups to work here and there in different cities who will live a life of sacrifice, typifying the Catholic idea of personal responsibility." [6]

And so Day defined good journalism as the reporting of eyewitness events, "not just taking the word of other papers and rewriting accounts." She continued:

> We are present at these affairs [strikes and picketing] because we think that lay apostles should bring their beliefs to the man in the street and not leave him to the mercy of Communist teaching; . . . [7]

Day often embraced the change-oriented, "investigative," "analytic," "interpretive," and "advocacy" type of journalism that Johnstone, et. al. found so characteristic of their subject alternative journalists. Like the alternative journalists surveyed in The News People, Day too was a participant journalist who emphasized "advocacy over neutrality," and "interpretation over speed of transmission." But did she also emphasize "substance over technique"? And did her ideological commitments overshadow her identity as a professional journalist, as Johnstone, et. al. observed it did among so many of their subjects? [8]

Molding of a Career

These questions are best answered by starting with Day's early life. From childhood, she was closely drawn to her family's profession of

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journalism. When she was only 11, she and her four siblings were already typing out a little family newspaper. Like her father, sports editor of Chicago's Inter-Ocean and later racing editor of New York's Morning Telegraph, her three brothers worked on newspapers all their adult lives. Two had distinguished journalism careers: Sam Houston Day eventually became managing editor of the New York Journal-American; Donald Day worked on E.W. Scripps' experimental adless newspaper, Chicago's Day Book, became sports editor of the New York Journal-American, and the Baltic correspondent for the Chicago Tribune. But the senior Day vehemently opposed women in journalism. When Dorothy in 1916 began to search for a job on a New York paper, he instructed his city editor friends to lecture her on women's proper place. Finally, when she found a job on The Socialist Call -- whose editor was hardly a crony of her staunchly Republican father -- young Dorothy had to leave home. Her father had made it plain that no daughter of his would work and live in his household. [9]

Despite such discouragement from her parent, which was not all that unusual for aspiring women journalists of this time, Dorothy Day even as a very young woman clearly sensed that journalism was her vocation, showing a professional commitment to her craft. As a University of Illinois student, 1914-1915, she wrote for both the school and the town newspapers; before she was 20 she was writing for The Socialist Call, and soon after for The Liberator and The Masses. And it was not only her father who disdained young Dorothy Day's journalistic ambitions; many years later she told of one "well-known novelist" who stated in a letter to Day's employer -- probably Max Eastman or Floyd Dell of The Masses -- that Day "had no ability

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or skill as a writer." [10] But Day was undaunted. By 1919 when she quit the nurse's training she had started in Brooklyn the previous year, she was adamantly certain of what her life's work would be:

> Then a longing to write, to be pursuing the career of journalist which I had chosen for myself, swept over me so that even though I loved the work in the hospital, I felt that it was a second choice, and not my vocation. My work was to write and there was no time for that where I was. 11

Throughout the rest of her life, Day thought of herself primarily as a journalist. She had the genuine journalist's urge to be read; she always wrote with an audience in mind. As an advocacy journalist, her commitment to "spreading the word" was predictably paramount: If the regular channels of publication were closed to her, she once remarked, she would not hesitate to mimeograph her articles and hand them out on street corners. [12]

"Writing was her craft," observed Thomas Cornell, an editor of The Catholic Worker in the early 1960s, and she took it very seriously. [13] According to the Rev. John J. Hugo, Day's friend and confessor for the last 40 years of her life, "She considered herself a writer. . . She always mentioned that. She considered writing not an avocation, but a vocation." [14] Day herself spelled this out in a 1967 letter to a benefactor:

> I have always considered writing as a way 'to earning a living' which each of us is bound to do as far as he is able before depending on others, even though we may act as stewards for others, and the servants for all (and get entirely too much credit for a work for which we have a vocation). Right now I am trying to write a pamphlet or booklet on the works of mercy,. . . pay for which will give me enough money to pay the rent on a few of the apartments for one month. 15

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Likewise she had contributed her free-lance writing income to help pay for the very first issue of The Catholic Worker, assembled late at night on her kitchen table. However, Day noted that "Writers are notoriously underpaid. I earned more working my way through a year of college at 20 cents an hour for housework, plus four hours work a day for board and room." [16] In a letter to her biographer, William D. Miller, she commented: "My long experience with publishing houses showed me money is not to be made by writing. You just have to do it for the love of it." [17] As an advocacy journalist, Day understandably viewed journalism as much more than a source of income with which to help the poor. The very nature of the income-producing journalism was crucial. She clarified this when, bemoaning authors' continual low pay, she added:

> But oh, the joy of seeing one's books (however unworthy of the honor of acceptance by the public) on newsstands, in chain drugstores, supermarkets, bus stations, even airports, handled by media who little know that many books of protest contain dynamite to blow our current unjust, war-ridden, profit-hungry civilization to smithereens. 18

"I have no faith in our kind of books selling," she wrote to Miller in 1970. "If they get on library shelves and influence people -- that is enough." [19]

Perception of Her Role

For Dorothy Day, then, journalism was a serious vocation, a calling as significant as the priesthood. Her journalism, she felt, should be devoted to serious subjects, and awaken people to the plight

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of the world and to their spiritual condition. She came to embrace advocacy journalism through her own youthful experiences, including a stint writing Hollywood scripts, which she found frustrating and meaningless; and through the process of writing her only attempt at fiction, her pre-conversion The Eleventh Virgin (1924) which sold to Hollywood on the basis of its piquant title. Thereafter, Day denounced such comparatively mundane, superficial prose. She advised aspiring journalists to resist the temptation of writing cheap trash just to make money, lamenting the sad career of a friend in the labor movement, who had gone to Hollywood and made a fortune while "prostituting his great talents as a writer." [20] Rather, Day admired writers such as Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, who dealt with monumental themes of human existence and spirituality; Dickens, Sinclair, and London, who she felt through their books made greater strides in social reform than many politicians and economists.

Yet at least another, personal reason spurred Day to write. She once explained privately that she penned her books House of Hospitality, The Long Loneliness, Loaves and Fishes, and On Pilgrimage: The Sixties -- journalistic accounts of the Catholic Worker Movement and her life within it -- to uplift herself:

> [They] deal with these problems of poverty, much of it written to ease an aching heart and a discouraged mind. And a most effective way of working things out for oneself as well as trying to make others understand. [21]

But Day was extremely careful not to sacrifice reader appeal by excessive brooding. She was ever conscious of the fragility of that balance,

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choosing not to emphasize substance at the expense of technique:

> I feel compelled to write. . . about my troubles and suddenly thought -- they [readers of The Catholic Worker] have enough troubles -- why add to their burden.
>
> The other day when writing my article and appeal I threw away my article, telling all of our troubles and thought 'This is not what readers want -- to be tortured with tales of broken families, men beating their wives and children, etc.' I will write happily of June and its beauties. Of course if you do this you get a double share of complaints from all around you who try to make you see how bad everything is. 22

Writing came as naturally as breathing to Dorothy Day, who from childhood kept a journal. "I am rather like the sorcerer's apprentice when I get at the typewriter," she confessed. "When I am turned on, a flood of words come and hundreds of new pages pour out." [23] Many of those who worked closely with her, such as Nina Polcyn Moore and Florence Weinfurter, Catholic Workers and friends of Day's for over 40 years strongly concur. [24]

Exactly how many articles Day wrote for The Catholic Worker cannot be determined, because many of the paper's unsigned pieces were also hers. During the 1930s and 1940s, Joseph Zarrella often observed Day at the printer's where, he recalled, "If we were short of copy, she'd pound out copy to fill the space. She was like a machine gun -- she could write just like that." Like many of her co-workers, he judged that she did "much of the writing" for The Catholic Worker, at least in the first decade or so, including most of the articles without bylines. [25]

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Dorothy Day as Investigative Reporter

In the early years of The Catholic Worker, Day contributed many investigative, muckraking reports of such topics as the 1930s seamen's strikes, the 1936 Vermont marble workers' strike, tenant evictions, and the Republic Steel massacre. As a young radical reporter she had honed her descriptive skills, and they sparkled in her 1936 series of articles on Arkansas sharecroppers, which appeared both in The Catholic Worker and in America:

> It was seventeen above zero when we started out this morning with a carload of flour, meal, lard, sugar, coffee, and soup. . .
>
> It wasn't until late in the afternoon that we reached the worst place of all, just outside Parkin, Arkansas. There drawn up along the road was a tent colony, which housed 108 people, four infants among them, and God knows how many children.
>
> The little girls giggled and laughed with their arms around each other while we talked to this evicted crowd of sharecroppers. Only one of them had on a sweater, and the heels and toes of all of them were coming out of their shoes. Their giggles started them coughing and woke up one of the babies, who cried fretfully, weakly. . .
>
> The little tent where we stood on the frozen earth was filled with fourteen children and there were thirteen more in the camp. Here too were four infants, wrapped in scanty cotton blankets. . .
>
> While surveys are being made and written the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union carries on. . . organizing the sharecroppers. . . They have had a hard struggle in the past and the future looks dark. But combined with faith and charity they have hope, and the terror that walks by day and by night in Arkansas does not daunt them. 26

In articles like this, Day showed the professional journalist's attention to technique, as well as the advocacy journalist's concern with substance. Such judicious use of technique, of course, served to intensify the impact of the message or substance, as she undoubtedly

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must have realized.

Dorothy Day also wrote some outstanding articles on the 1930s labor movement for The Catholic Worker. Pro-worker, the paper was able to develop inside sources for the coverage of unions, strikes, and other labor issues. Day herself knew many national labor figures, and interviewed union heads such as Philip Murray, John L. Lewis, John Brophy, Joseph Curran, and Harry Bridges. Day was one of only two reporters whom the workers permitted to enter the auto plants during the General Motors sit-down strikes.[27]

In 1936 Day covered a speech by the Rev. Stephen Kazincy, the "labor priest," in Braddock, Pennsylvania. She captured the essence of the event with such evocative reporting as:

> The steel workers spoke first and the sun broiled down and the men and their wives stood there motionless, grave, unsmiling, used to hardship, and thinking of the hardships to come if the steel masters locked them out.
>
> And then Father Kazincy was announced. He got up before the microphone, a broad, straight man of about sixty. His hair was snow white, his head held high. . . his words came abrupt, forceful, and unhesitating. . .
>
> 'Remember that you have an immortal soul,' he told them. 'Remember your dignity as men.
>
> 'Do not let the Carnegie Steel Company crush you.'[28]

Once Day established The Catholic Worker's tradition of muckraking, she began to leave such writing more to others. Still, throughout her life she retained her ability to write solid, informative, compelling advocacy journalism, whether describing Cesar Chavez's struggles in the California vineyards, her 1962 travels to Castro's Cuba, or the problem of racial injustice. Day kept the journalist's flair for telling quote

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and vivid detail that she developed so early in her career. Such skills also enriched the background pieces which she occasionally wrote.[29]

Dorothy Day as Personal Columnist

As she lessened her more investigative writing, Day increasingly devoted herself to her column, originally called "Day by Day," shortly changed to "All in a Day," then to "On Pilgrimage" in 1946. Even today "On Pilgrimage" is reprinted and it is still the heart of the paper whenever it appears.[30] Dwight Macdonald once aptly described it as a combination of Pascal's Pensées and Eleanor Roosevelt's "My Day." The column consists of warm, appealing ruminations on subjects as diverse as children, visitors, animals, the saints, the weather, the soup line, prayer, putting out the paper -- sometimes all in the same piece. All of Day's writing tended to be personal, but "On Pilgrimage," whose column format afforded a great degree of creative freedom, was especially so. Day frequently conversed about her role as mother and grandmother, adding to this personal effect. Her use of the first-person voice gave the column a personal immediacy, as did the many vivid details, including dialogue and quotation. Indeed, Day's column, like her autobiography The Long Loneliness, clearly shows she had the sensibilities of the successful fiction writer--the sensory sensitivity, the scene-setting skills, the ear for dialogue, and a well developed sense of the comic which permeated much of her

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writing. For instance, even though she was sure Peter Maurin was "a saint and a great teacher," she perceived the irony of their relationship: "He was twenty years older than I, he spoke with an accent so thick it was hard to penetrate to the thought beneath, he had a one-track mind, he did not like music, he did not read Dickens or Dostoevsky, and he did not bathe." [31] Dorothy Day could have been a successful writer of fiction, but her conversion "deepened her commitment to use her artistry not in the service of her own imaginative vision, but rather to put that vision to work to describe the artistry already present in creation in all its natural and human variety," as Sally Cunneen, co-editor of Cross Currents, has pointed out. [32]

Day was not an intellectual theorist; she did not attempt to set forth her ideas abstractly or systematically. Rather, her column described people she had known, immediate problems, and concrete situations. In this, as her friend the Rev. John J. Hugo has observed, she resembled the writers of the great literary masterpieces she admired and read so widely, those who mirror life as they see it. But while they saw it imaginatively, she saw life in the raw, and in the profound problems of our age. [33]

In her personal life, in her presence, and in her journalism, Dorothy Day communicated her commitment to personalism or personal activism. It was not theory of which she wrote, but deeply felt convictions. "You can't write about things without doing them," she remarked in an interview in 1971. "You just have to live that same way." [34]

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Living a life of voluntary poverty herself, she could write of it in the most personal, vivid, and moving terms. She knew exactly what it meant to scrounge in the clothing bin, hoping for a not-too-threadbare pair of fitting socks; she knew what it meant to subsist on borrowed, utilitarian food; she knew what it meant to beg for extended credit on overdue rent, heat, and light bills -- and sometimes not to be able to afford heat in the cruelest winter. In her January 1963 journal, published in The Catholic Worker, Day described her room at the Catholic Worker House of Hospitality on New York's Lower East Side:

> And then the place where I am, cold, unheatable because the gas flow is meager, cluttered and dusty, Marie's newspapers and magazines piled high -- what compulsion is there for her to collect, collect, collect. . . Now she brings in two shopping bags for a night, God knows what all besides, . . . and the room gets fuller and fuller so there is scarcely a passageway through. And there is always an odor in the rooms. My room is both dirty and cold and I have not the energy or strength to clean. My bones are still with cold and I am tired with the weight of clothes I put on to keep warm. I will look for a sunny place in the neighborhood and see if I can move and be alone for a while. 35

Day lived like those she served, and her writing reflected this personal acquaintance with poverty and sorrow.

Day was at her best when describing some of the simple people who came by the Catholic Worker House, whose daily struggles she knew firsthand. Ever conscious of technique, Day always introduced the poor by their first names -- Bill, Anna, Millie -- as if to say, "They are one of us." She deftly characterized ordinary men and women, sympathetically yet unsentimentally. She wrote many finely

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crafted, memorable obituaries for those "least among us":

> All of you who ride the Pennsylvania or the Lehigh pass by those pig farms set in the swamps, ugly as sin, evil-smelling holes, where thousands of pigs are raised and fattened on garbage from New York hotels. . .
>
> John Ryder worked in this setting, cleaning out pig sties, caring for the hogs,. . . On pay days he would come over to New York and too often spend his holidays on the Bowery. He told us the pay was good and the meals too, but it was another case of needing heroic virtue to live under such surroundings. Too often the men sought surcease and rest and dreams in drink. . . But it is difficult to clamber out of the trough of the destitute. . .
>
> John, like the prodigal son, came home to us after feeding off the husks of the swine. And he could not be feasted because he was dying. Instead, he had that real feast, the bread of the strong [the Eucharist], and he died and was laid out in the chapel at Maryfarm, and each night before his burial we said the office of the dead as though he were one of the mightiest of the sons of God,. . . 36

Day was also particularly sensitive to the presence of babies and small children, recognizing in their lives a means to dramatize great spiritual themes. This mode can be glimpsed even in her pre-Catholic Worker writing, such as "Having a Baby," her delightful and moving account of giving birth to her daughter Tamar. First published in New Masses, it was later reprinted in workers' papers throughout the Soviet Union. [37] In "A Baby Is Born," printed in the January, 1941 Catholic Worker, Day juxtaposed the birthing experience of a destitute, young unmarried mother with the plight of the wretched poor lining up outside the Catholic Worker House for morning coffee, and with despairing wounded soldiers. Her piece, a masterpiece of nonfiction technique, thus became much more

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than the usual tale of the unwed mother's woe. Characteristically, in this article Day balanced substance and style in a fruitful tension:

> Every night before we went to bed we asked the young mother, 'How do you feel?' and asked each other. . . 'Is there taxi money?' in case it would be too late to call an ambulance.
>
> And then, one morning at five I heard rapid footsteps in the room above, the voice of the ambulance interne in the hall, 'I'll be waiting downstairs,' and I realized the great moment had arrived.
>
> It was still dark out, but it was undubitably morning. Lights were on in the kitchens of surrounding tenements. Fish-peddlers, taxi drivers, truckmen, longshoremen, were up and on their way to work. The business of life was beginning. And I thought, 'How cheerful to begin to have a baby at this time of the morning!' Not at 2 A.M., for instance, a dreary time, of low vitality, when people sink beneath their woes and courage flags. Five o'clock is a cheerful hour.
>
> Down in our little back yard . . . down in that cavernous pit with tenements looming five and seven stories around, we could hear them dragging out the ash cans, bringing in the coffee cans for the line. . .
>
> Out in front the line was forming already and two or three fires in the gutters brought out in sharp relief the haggard faces of the men, the tragedy of their rags. The bright flames, the blue-black sky, the grey buildings all about, everything sharp and clear, and this morning a white ambulance drawn up in front of the door.
>
> This is not the story of the tragedy of the mother. We are not going into detail about that. But I could not help thinking that while I was glad the morning was beginning, it was a miserable shame that the departure of the young woman for her ordeal should be witnessed by a long, silent waiting line of men. They surveyed her, a slight figure, bundled on that cruelly cold morning (and pain and fear make the blood run cold), come running down from the dark, silent house to get into the ambulance.
>
> Not one man, not a dear husband, not a protector on whom she could lean for comfort and strength. There was no Joseph on this winter morning. But there were hundreds of men, silent, waiting and wondering perhaps as they watched the ambulance, whether it was life or death that had called it out. 38

Intensifying this powerful juxtaposition, Day moved to deeper themes.

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She compared the sadness of a woman giving birth alone to the suffering of the soldier, "with his guts spilled out on the battlefield, lying for hours impaled upon barbed wire." By the end of the piece, she had noted the suffering but ultimately life-producing nature of birth, and the pointlessness of death, all that war issues the soldier for his agony. Whatever the circumstances of a child's birth, she observed, there must be joy: "And this tiny creature who little realizes his dignity as a member of the Mystical Body of Christ, lies upstairs from me now as I write, swaddled in a blanket and reposing in a laundry basket." As Christ came to her in the persons of the hungry men in the morning coffee line -- "for inasmuch as ye have done it unto these the least of my brethren, ye have done it unto me" -- so too was Christ present in this newborn child, just as Christ himself was once present as a baby boy. But Day was not tritely cheerful as she gazed at the "Rosy and calm and satisfied" infant, with his "look of infinite peace and complacency." Without descending into hopelessness, she reflected upon how little the child knows of what is in the world, of "what horrors beset us on every side."

In her March 1951 column, Day wrote of another baby whose presence caused reflection. In her typically homey, personal style she observed:

> Downstairs the baby is crying while Rita gets her breakfast ready, mashed prunes, baby cereal and milk, all mixed together deliciously. Little Rachel is three months old now and eats with avidity.

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But by the end of the column Day had moved very adroitly from the child to a sensitive description of ill-will and pettiness, lightened by her ironic touch. She explained her purpose in doing so:

> It may seem that I am speaking lightly of these things, but these are sorrowful mysteries indeed, the mystery of sin and suffering and how we are all members one of another, and drag each other down, or pull each other up. 39

Dorothy Day's purpose in such juxtapositions as those of the "baby pieces" -- and her consummate skill as a journalist -- was her union of the everyday and the ultimate. In the most universal, everyday events such as birth, she recognized profound import. In this way her writing resembles that of E.B. White, the gifted literary journalist who also delved beyond the surface of the apparently mundane to deep truths, often with a comic stroke. Using such common events and people as a springboard, Day was able to communicate a profound message to a much wider audience, than if she had simply written theory or bald propaganda -- that is, concentrated solely on substance. As an advocate, she realized the importance of crafting an appeal as universal as possible; and to this task she applied her considerable skills as a professional journalist.

Readers loved it. The Catholic Worker Papers contain many favorable letters from subscribers and other readers. Often they addressed Day familiarly as "Dorothy," sometimes explaining as one young seminarian did, that after they read her writing they felt as if they knew her personally. "The articles you have written. . .

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are among the most beautiful pieces I have ever read," one woman wrote. When another subscriber read Day's October 1962 column about her Cuban travels, she wrote to describe her reaction: "I was overcome with emotion, and said aloud, though I was alone, 'Thank God for people like Dorothy Day!' And I am a person who practically never uses the word 'God'; in this case, there was just no other way to say what I felt." [40]

Thus Day's conversational, unpretentious writing provided a needed balance to the more sophisticated, theoretical articles elsewhere in the paper. Intuitively, Day usually appealed to the workers and let other writers appeal to the scholars, resulting in an editorial balance that accurately expressed the dual nature of the Catholic Worker Movement: It tries to unify religious hope and social reform, by advocating radical social reconstruction based on the Gospel. It denounces the present order and doles out soup and shelter, simultaneously seeking to build a new earth as well as a heaven.

Dorothy Day as Editor and Publisher

Unlike the alternative journalists surveyed by Johnstone, et. al., Dorothy Day's ideological commitments did not seem to overshadow her identity as a professional journalist, but existed in tension. This can be seen in her demeanor as editor and publisher of The Catholic Worker. From the beginning, the paper was Day's special endeavor; she chose the news, wrote much of the copy, and even prepared the makeup and

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headlines at times. A shrewd manager, a forceful editor and publisher committed to professional journalistic values, Day's very bearing communicated a sense of her strong personality. Michael Harrington, who edited The Catholic Worker in the early 1960s, described her simply as "a presence. When she comes into a room even a stranger who had never even heard of her would realize that someone significant had just entered." Many of Day's other associates have also singled out her commanding demeanor, her ability to hearten others. [41]

Those who worked closely with her have often, independently of each other, asserted her major role as leader of the Movement and editor of the paper. Ammon Hennacy, who helped edit the paper in the early 1950s, remarked:

> Without her patience and knowledge, The Catholic Worker could not have lasted six months. She knew what an issue was and how to write it up so as to be understood by the reader. 42

Many other Catholic Workers and associates have made similar comments, as have scholarly observers. [43]

Almost from the beginning, calls poured in from churches and peace and social justice organizations around the country, asking Day to lecture. As she increased her traveling and speaking engagements, she delegated some of her editorial responsibilities. As always, Day recruited her editors informally -- but very carefully. Cornell recalled how he, a Catholic Worker with a bent for writing, became editor of The Catholic Worker in September, 1962: "Dorothy Day put a bunch of manuscripts and galley proofs in my hands and said, 'here,

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edit the paper.' I was petrified." Day did instruct him in the basics. She told Cornell: "Use short paragraphs because they're easier to read; break up those paragraphs with subheads; use a lot of graphics; and don't butt headlines." [44]

On the road, ever the conscientious journalist, Day always checked on the paper, participating through frequent correspondence and memos. Nina Polcyn Moore remembers Day as "constantly in touch with things published in the paper." According to Joseph Zarrella, "When she was gone, she wrote letters -- suggesting articles, and so on. She reviewed articles, sent them back and forth, and kept control of the paper." [45]

"Dorothy kept tabs on the paper according to the degree of trust she had in the person handling it," according to Cornell. "She had a high degree of trust in me. I understood what she wanted. If that weren't so, I wouldn't have survived one month as editor." [46]

It was not enough that Day's editors agree with her on the substance of potential articles; she wanted them to pay attention as well to style. According to Edmund J. Egan, "She probably hit some kind of editorial chutzpah when she took out a par graph of something Mike Harrington had written and inserted a paragraph which she thought was better, which she had written, . . . [47] At the same time, she seems to have felt her professional autonomy threatened when her copy was edited; occasionally Day was irritated by Cornell's editing of her untidy, penciled-over manuscripts. "Mostly I

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just took care of 'housekeeping details,'" he recalled, but sometimes she noticed his editing and "complained furiously." [48]

Day always supported professional standards of journalism when she dealt with readers who wished to write for the paper. The Catholic Worker Papers contain many letters from Day to readers, seeking to inspire them to elaborate in a full-length article the small pieces of information they had just sent in. And just as Day used a personal writing style to make her appeal as universal as possible, so did she constantly seek this in the work of possible Catholic Worker writers. "Personal experiences are always so much more valuable than vague generalizations," she counseled one. [49] Appropriate substance was not enough in an article; she also placed a premium on appropriate style.

IV. Conclusion

The picture of Dorothy Day that emerges is that of an advocacy journalist completely committed to proselytizing for her cause, yet simultaneously identifying with the goals of the professional journalist. This meant that she, like the alternative journalists surveyed in The News People, was a participant journalist who emphasized "advocacy over neutrality" and "interpretation over speed of transmission." But unlike them, she did not emphasize "substance over technique," and most importantly, her ideological commitments did not overshadow her

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identity as a professional journalist. Instead they existed in tense but effective tandem. One result of this was an outstandingly written and edited journalistic product, The Catholic Worker, with a dual appeal to workers and scholars. As the mouthpiece for the Catholic Worker Movement, the paper did the Movement proud and was instrumental in gaining it wide support. Surely this would not have been so if Dorothy Day had not forged an early self-identification as a professional journalist.

Still, many questions remain to be explored: For instance, while Day confidently asserted herself as a journalist, she sometimes seemed ambivalent about what her proper role as the female leader of the Catholic Worker Movement should be. She was continually self-deprecating, probably because of her conservative upbringing, the time in which she lived, and her own lifestyle -- Day was, after all, an unwed mother, a single parent, a career woman, a convert, a maverick woman trying to start an unprecedented, radical Catholic movement and publication in a sexually conservative church, during a decade which saw perhaps the century's most repressive anti-women legislation. Dorothy Day undermined her position of leadership, actually asserting that women's proper place was to follow, not lead. Ironically, there was an ingenuity, perhaps unconscious, to all Day's expressions of feminine deference, as Mel Piehl has pointed out.[50] She avoided entanglement in the often vitriolic debates and discussions that were a staple of the Catholic Worker House by pleading that it was a man's job to argue and to talk, and a woman's to serve and to administer. The average man was

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quickly silenced by Day's blithe rejoinder, "I have no time for arguing and besides, I think like a woman." [51] "I am sure we 'got away' with a lot because I was a woman and a convert," Day confided to Dwight Macdonald. [52] To Thomas Cornell she mentioned many times that "the reason that she [had] gotten away with so much is that she is a woman, and people don't pay that much attention to women, or excuse their excesses more freely." [53]

And for Day, raised to believe that their very nature limited women to certain lesser roles, Peter Maurin's presence as co-founder -- although she was the true, functioning head of the Movement and the paper -- undoubtedly provided confidence and security. Too, she could point to a male co-founder and achieve greater credibility in the sexually conservative Catholic Church than if she were a mere woman operating alone. [54]

It is beyond the scope of this paper to deal with these topics, but surely it seems all the more remarkable that Day could nevertheless simultaneously assert herself as a professional journalist with such confidence. It is hoped that future research will continue to explore these significant, complex, and fascinating questions.

In the meantime, what of the fate of The Catholic Worker? Can it again achieve the glorious, vigorous quality it knew from Day's exacting editorship and truly professional writing? Doubtless only if someone of her stature and temperament emerges -- someone who can contribute excellent journalism and inspire others to do so; someone who can be spiritually part of the Catholic Worker Movement yet embrace the

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most professional values of journalism, thereby crafting a strong appeal. Such a combination has rarely appeared among advocacy journalists.

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Notes

1
Arthur Jones, "U.S. Catholic War Resistance Growth 'Historic'; Building on the Catholic Worker Image," National Catholic Reporter, Oct. 30, 1981, pp. 1,20; Marcus Raskin, "The Church vs. The Bomb: War, Peace and The Bishops," The Nation, Jan. 29, 1983, pp. 105-108.

2
Content analysis has substantiated the editorial consistency of the paper; see Nancy L. Roberts, "Dorothy Day and The Catholic Worker, 1933-1982," Ph.D. thesis, University of Minnesota, 1982, pp. 66-76.

Collections of Catholic Worker articles include: Thomas Cornell and James Forest, eds., A Penny a Copy: Readings from the Catholic Worker (New York: Macmillan, 1968); Dorothy Day, On Pilgrimage: The Sixties, a collection of her 1960s articles (New York: Curtis Books, 1972); and Dorothy Day, By Little and By Little: The Selected Writings of Dorothy Day, ed. with an introduction by Robert Ellsberg (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983).

3
John W.C. Johnstone, Edward J. Slawski, and William W. Bowman, The News People: A Sociological Portrait of American Journalists and Their Work (University of Illinois Press, 1976).

4
Dorothy Day, "Technique of Action," The Catholic Worker, Dec. 1933, p. 2.

5
Dorothy Day, "Day After Day," The Catholic Worker, Sept. 1942, p. 1.

6
Letter from Dorothy Day to MacAlan Gardner, Sacramento, California, Sept. 30, 1935, Dorothy Day - Catholic Worker Collection, Marquette University, Milwaukee (hereafter cited as "CW Papers").

7
Dorothy Day, "An Answer to Some Charges against The Catholic Worker, privately printed, 1937, CW Papers (reprint of an open letter in The Brooklyn Tablet, 1935).

8
Johnstone, et. al., The News People, pp. 174-175; 178; 171.

9
Dorothy Day, Loaves and Fishes (Harper and Row, 1963), p. 7; Dorothy Day, The Long Loneliness: The Autobiography of Dorothy Day (Harper and Row, 1952), p. 48; William D. Miller, Dorothy Day: A Biography (Harper and Row, 1982), pp. 7-8, 19, 54; William D. Miller, A Harsh and Dreadful Love: Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement (Liveright, 1973), p. 44.

10 Stanley Vishnewski, "Days of Action," unpublished manuscript circa 1966, CW Papers, pp. 171-172.

11 Day, The Long Loneliness, p. 91.

12 Vishnewski, "Days of Action," p. 171.

13 Personal interview, Milwaukee, Nov. 6, 1981.

14 Personal interview, Milwaukee, Nov. 5, 1981.

15 Letter from Dorothy Day to Dr. Anscome, Jan. 17, 1967, CW Papers.

16 Letter from Dorothy Day to Dr. Anscome, Jan. 17, 1967, CW Papers.

17 Letter from Dorothy Day to William D. Miller, Oct. 8, 1974, private files of William D. Miller, Milwaukee (hereafter referred to as "WDM Files").

18 Dorothy Day, "Newsletter," Jan. 1973, CW Papers.

19 Letter from Dorothy Day to William D. Miller, June 25, 1970, WDM Files.

20 Vishnewski, "Days of Action," p. 172.

21 Letter from Dorothy Day to Dr. Anscome, Jan. 17, 1967, CW Papers.

22 Dorothy Day, notebook entry, June 1960, WDM Files.

23 Dorothy Day, On Pilgrimage: The Sixties (Curtis Books, 1972), pp. 88-89.

24 Personal interviews, Milwaukee, Nov. 5, 1981; also, Fritz Eichenberg, illustrator for The Catholic Worker for nearly 35 years, concurred (personal interview, Peace Dale, Rhode Island, Jan. 12, 1983).

25 Personal interview, Milwaukee, Nov. 5, 1981.

26
Dorothy Day, "Sharecroppers," America, March 7, 1936, pp. 516-517.

27
Dorothy Day, "Experiences of C.W. Editor In Steel Towns with C.I.O.," The Catholic Worker, Aug. 1936, pp. 1-2. Mel Piehl, Breaking Bread: The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America (Temple University Press, 1982), p. 78 and Chapter III, "A Penny Paper" (pp. 57-94), were useful in preparing this section.

28
Dorothy Day, "Father Kazincy, Workers' Friend, Speaks for Labor," The Catholic Worker, Aug. 1936, p. 4.

29
For example, in "Khrushchev and Alexander Nevsky" (The Catholic Worker, Oct. 1960, pp. 1,3) she delved into Russian history, describing the life of a thirteenth-century Russian national hero and saint of the Russian Orthodox Church. In "Theophane Venard and Ho Chi Minh" (The Catholic Worker, May 1954, pp. 1,6), Day presented a lengthy (about 3,500 words), well-researched analysis of the political history of Vietnam, concluding with a warning against American military involvement.

30
The collection of Day's Catholic Worker essays from the 1960s bears the same title.

31
Dorothy Day, Loaves and Fishes, p. 101.

32
Sally Cunneen, "Dorothy Day: The Storyteller as Human Model," a paper presented at "The Catholic Worker and American Catholicism: Fifty Years," a conference sponsored by the History Department, Holy Cross College, Worcester, Massachusetts, May 2, 1983.

33
Rev. John J. Hugo, "Dorothy Day, Apostle of the Industrial Age," 1980, privately printed, CW Papers.

34
Quoted in Jeff Dietrich and Susan Pollack, "An Interview with Dorothy Day," The Catholic Agitator (Los Angeles), Dec. 1971, p. 2.

35
Dorothy Day, journal entry, Jan. 1963, WDM Files.

36
Dorothy Day, "For These Dear Dead," The Catholic Worker, Nov. 1946, p. 6.

37
Dorothy Day, "Having a Baby," New Masses, June 1928, pp. 5-6.

38 Dorothy Day, "A Baby Is Born," The Catholic Worker, Jan. 1941, pp. 1,7.

39 Dorothy Day, "On Pilgrimage," The Catholic Worker, March 1951, p. 6.

40 Letter from Tom Albrecht to Dorothy Day, Dec. 25, 1941, CW Papers; letter from Anne McKeon to Dorothy Day, Sept. 16, 1967, CW Papers; letter from Mildred McLeod to Dorothy Day, Nov. 8, 1962, WDM Files.

41 Michael Harrington, Fragments of the Century (Simon and Schuster, 1972), p. 19.

42 Quoted by Judith Nies, Seven Women (Viking Press, 1977), pp. 196-197.

43 For example, Joseph Zarrella agreed completely (personal interview, Milwaukee, Nov. 5, 1981), as did Mary Alice Lautner Zarrella, who also worked closely with Day in the 1930s as a Catholic Worker (personal interview, Milwaukee, Nov. 5, 1981). Day's friend and confessor, the Rev. John J. Hugo, made a similar comment: "Dorothy ran the paper; she put her special stamp on it" (personal interview, Milwaukee, Nov. 4, 1981), as did Catholic Worker illustrator Fritz Eichenberg (personal interview, Peace Dale, Rhode Island, Jan. 12, 1983).

Day's biographer, William D. Miller, has often asserted that Day was the primary force behind The Catholic Worker (for example, A Harsh and Dreadful Love, p. 76). Historian David J. O'Brien described Day as a woman "who exerted a tremendous influence on the maturing Catholic community" (American Catholics and Social Reform: The New Deal Years (Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 192). Historian Mel Piehl has stated, too, that "the major outlines of editorial policy were clearly set by Day" (Breaking Bread, p. 77).

44 Thomas Cornell, personal interview, Milwaukee, Nov. 6, 1981.

45 Personal interviews, Milwaukee, Nov. 5, 1981.

46 Personal interview, Milwaukee, Nov. 6, 1981.

47 Edmund J. Egan, interviewed by Deane Mowrer, Tivoli, New York, Oct. 1968 (typescript contained in CW Papers).

48 Personal interview, Milwaukee, Nov. 6, 1981.

49
Letter from Dorothy Day to Joseph Beller, New York City, Sept. 24, 1934, CW Papers. Also see letter from Day to Catherine McSoley, Auburn, Rhode Island, Oct. 16, 1934, CW Papers.

50
Piehl, Breaking Bread, pp. 61-66.

51
Vishnewski, "Days of Action," p. 165.

52
Dwight Macdonald, "Introduction," Greenwood reprint edition of The Catholic Worker (Westport, Ct., 1970), p. 12.

53
Personal interview, Milwaukee, Nov. 6, 1981.

54
Piehl, Breaking Bread, p. 65.